Second Series

PAPERS FOR WAR TIME. No. 13

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Patriotism

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By

PERCY DEARMER, D.D.

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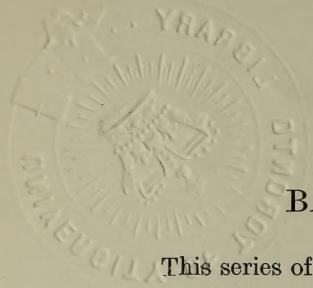
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BY

PERCY DEARMER, D.D.

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BASIS OF PUBLICATION

This series of Papers is based on the following convictions :

1. That Great Britain was in August morally bound to declare war and is no less bound to carry the war to a decisive issue ;
2. That the war is none the less an outcome and a revelation of the un-Christian principles which have dominated the life of Western Christendom and of which both the Church and the nations have need to repent ;
3. That followers of Christ, as members of the Church, are linked to one another in a fellowship which transcends all divisions of nationality or race ;
4. That the Christian duties of love and forgiveness are as binding in time of war as in time of peace ;
5. That Christians are bound to recognize the insufficiency of mere compulsion for overcoming evil and to place supreme reliance upon spiritual forces and in particular upon the power and method of the Cross ;
6. That only in proportion as Christian principles dictate the terms of settlement will a real and lasting peace be secured ;
7. That it is the duty of the Church to make an altogether new effort to realize and apply to all the relations of life its own positive ideal of brotherhood and fellowship ;
8. That with God all things are possible.

PATRIOTISM

Patriotism is more easily praised than explained. We do not really know why Belgium objects to being a member of a well-ordered and prosperous German federation, or why a Teutonic province like Alsace should be passionately French, or why a nation like that of Poland, which had no political cohesion in the days of its greatness, should have shown a most exalted spirit of nationalism during the long martyrdom of its dismemberment. We know that a British father, in times of peace, when he is actuated very largely by reason, would rather marry his daughter to a German prince than to an English private; we know that our scholars would rather be interned with a company of Berlin professors than with the honest dustmen of London. In fact we had long discovered that science, art, labour, feminism, were international; here, we said, is reason come to its own at last—'Workers of the world unite!'

And then there was war: and there came a cry in the heart of every man and woman, an insistent ghostly summons. International solidarity crumbled into level dust, because it was only built by reason. Patriotism swept it all away, because loyalty to the fatherland is an intuition. Professors who had worked together and quoted one another all their lives began to hurl manifestoes across the frontier; labour found that its only real solidarity was under a national flag, battalioned with the *bourgeoisie*; the militant feminist lay down with the lambs of the Home Office and began to knit mittens. A great psychological philosopher who lectures at Paris, a keen-faced, spare

Frenchman (with a German name), whose philosophy differs from other philosophies in taking account of human nature, is now witnessing the justification of his claim: 'Il y a des choses que l'intelligence seule est capable de chercher, mais que, par elle-même, elle ne trouvera jamais. Ces choses, l'instinct seul les trouverait; mais il ne les cherchera jamais.'

We will not try to explain why men are patriotic. Perhaps we needed the infernal crimes and horrors of Armageddon to remind us that they are, and that neither dynasts nor diplomats, neither the theories of Utopian materialism nor the sweet appeal of pure reason, can make them otherwise. The war does at least prove to us that the greatest things are not intellectual, that men are moved by other forces more spiritual, more noble, and more true. The whole world shouts it; half the world is at war to proclaim it; and it may be that already a million men have died to prove the reality of an 'abstraction'. Civilization has not pushed out of it, as from some outworn barbarism, but it has grown with civilization. The national principle, indeed, was not established in Europe until the nineteenth century. We may be annoyed by the things that Häckel has said about England, but at least he has proved that he is not a rationalist.

Perhaps God has allowed us to pull down the temple of modern civilization over our heads in order that the survivors may be cured of the modern habit of regarding man as a calculating machine; perhaps we had to make atonement by blood for our narrow and gross intellectualism; and perhaps there was no other way for us to be born again, in order that, with the hearts of little children, we might understand that the eternal things are unseen.

Certainly our fatherlands are invisible. We can see only a few fields here and there, or a few slums, or a few heaps of architecture, mostly very bad, and faces that we pass

in the street, not always admirable ; and books, some bad and some good, and most of the best, translations ; and also there are familiar sounds and smells and tastes. But what we love is a mere 'abstraction', an inward and spiritual grace of which these are but the broken symbols. Yet we love it, and our love for it is wonderful ; quite ordinary people are glad to die in agony for it, and base people are transformed, and careless people become heroic, and selfish people offer great, joyful sacrifices to the unseen.

That is religion. Sabatier was right in his *Orientation de la religion française* when he claimed the passionate devotion of his countrymen to Alsace-Lorraine since 1870 as a sign that France was becoming religious again. This is not the place to criticize patriotism in its theological aspects, to inquire into the ancient henotheisms, or to ask how far, in worshipping their country, men are truly worshipping some aspect of the divine perfection. It may be that patriotism stands or falls with the Invocation of Saints. But at least we may assert that subjectively patriotism is a form of religion ; of this communal charity it may be said that love is of God, and he that loveth is born of God.

Certainly, with many men, that is the only form of religion they possess ; they have come through atheism back to the old henotheistic starting-point, and believe in Britannia of the Anglo-Saxons or Germania of the Teutons as the Semitic tribes once believed in Chemosh of the Moabites or Moloch of the Ammonites. I, for one, would not lessen their devotion by one jot ; if a Häckel will not worship God, it is at least to the good that he should worship something outside himself that eludes his microscope : and our criticism of the free-thinkers who have so long worshipped France, and guided her destinies, for good or evil, is only that their faith has not been broad enough to include the greatest with the less—

'This ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.'

Patriotism is a salt against rottenness, a glorious spur to high endeavour; it recovers the half-obliterated virtue of loyalty, calls every man to service, and ennobles great and small alike. 'Tis so universal that even the professors cannot escape it.

But all is not patriotism that glitters. Fear, prejudice, and hate, a base and morbid sensationalism, collective selfishness and corporate egotism, pass themselves off for the true thing in war time: there are not a few who are as eager to make money out of their country's need now as in times of peace; and we non-combatants are always in danger of thinking that the beginning and end of our duty is to call vehemently upon the young—and the poor—to sacrifice themselves in defence of our comfortable persons and property. And, in general, this patriotism is marred by gross and cruel faults, just as the religion of Christendom has been, though the faults of patriotism are not used by agnostics as an argument against it—as the faults of religion are; which, possibly, is because the agnostics are inside the one and not inside the other.

Patriotism, like religion, is of course marred by boasting. So vulgar a fault need only be mentioned, and is really less with us to-day than in former wars; but it is not dead, and we shall do well to have in mind certain of our own poets, when we sing—

> Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
> And lesser breeds without the law—

for the lesser breeds are to be distinguished by the thickness rather than by the colour of their skin, and many Gentiles write articles in our own newspapers.

Patriotism is often marred also by evil-speaking, and in this also it is like religion. The members of each

church have had an inveterate and suicidal habit of condemning other churches, of abusing, attacking, and persecuting them—even the gentlest Christians seldom rising above a mild disparagement : and the enemies of all the churches have taken them at their mutual valuation. This is a curious eccentricity in human nature, and difficult to explain ; for, after all, an adoring husband does not go about calling on other husbands and explaining what unpleasant wives they have. He is content to admire his own wife. We might try this method in the case of our own church ; and then perhaps our newspapers will follow suit in international matters. It is good to be chivalrous. It is certainly foolish to depreciate the enemy, and no act of grace brings such sublime reward for both sides as to praise him.

Patriotism, too, may become non-moral, or definitely immoral and atheistic. States, like churches, may begin by a lust for power, a straining after infallibility, and pass on through a perversion of loyalty to the consequent loss of honour and the crashing down of ethics. To say, as many do, ' My country, right or wrong,' is dangerous ; to think, as most do, ' My country is always right,' is more dangerous by the addition of a lie ; to make a philosophy of these sentiments, and to say that above the State there is nothing at all, is in fact to drift into atheism. We blame the enemy now because some Prussian writers have taught that the interests of the Fatherland over-ride every other consideration ; we have also, long ago, it is to be hoped, blamed our allies in France for having taught that no other societies, such as the Church, have any rights against the State ; but we shall be wise to examine ourselves whether we also have not given way to both these doctrines which set the State above liberty, above right, above God. A Christian cannot turn to the State for his ethics, or take diplomats as his spiritual directors ; the

only patriotism which he can respect is that which bows before the God of truth and righteousness. Now this Christian patriotism, because it is moral, is capable of being international. A patriotism that cannot be international, that can find no room for the wider loyalty to humanity or the deeper loyalty to the Church, always becomes criminal, and so long as it endures will continue to stain the pages of history. Loyalty to the kingdoms of the world may indeed become treason to the Kingdom of God. The true patriot must be able to say to his country—

> I could not love thee, dear, so much,
> Loved I not honour more.

When he has to choose between faith and fatherland he will not hesitate.

At the root of all the diseases of patriotism, as of religion, lies the spirit of hatred. The history of Christendom indeed would have to be entirely rewritten had Christian nations and churches even tried to love their neighbours, not to mention their enemies ; and we are what we are because of the rarity of Christian charity. War could hardly have come upon us now, if the gospel of hate had not been preached for many years, and a bogy England created by the great national historian of Prussia, just as a bogy Russia is made by many sincere English and German pacifists. We, on our side, perhaps not unprovoked, give rein to the vice ; many who have never doubted themselves to be Christians are sincerely annoyed if they are told they must love Germans ; and I know of one person who left a society because its secretary was feeding a German family and giving them drink. We reproduce horrid outbursts of spleen from the German press, though this can have no result but to inflame hatred on our side ; and it has been openly proclaimed that the goad of

acrimony is essential to military success, as if our soldiers were too weak without that stimulant, and did not know that their business is not to detest the enemy but to defeat him—as if we were not all alike looking for the peace that will come. For, after all, the war will soon be over, and then we shall all have to live in friendly relations together again.

Primitive man could not understand being loyal to his own tribe without warring against other tribes, but we have to put away that old man. In the nations as in the churches we have to learn the simple truth that we can love our own fellowship without hating the fellowships of others.

Nay, more, there is a charity of fellowship. We need to have great heart enough to love other churches and nations, and thereby to love our own yet better. The best Englishman is also a good European—nay, he is a humanitarian : the best churchman is a Catholic—one who loves the whole of Christendom as well as his own group. We have to be patriotic and loyal like Christ, and like Him also to be universal.

In a word, the true patriot is he who believes—not in one patriotism but in all, who respects the nationality of others and welcomes loyalty wherever it exists. In the past we have not been patriotic enough. We have not really believed in patriotism.

That is the key to the international situation. In the past the world was dynastic ; countries were mere gauds, to be torn from one crown and stuck on to another. The dynasts strove, by marriage and by war, to enlarge their estates, and patriotism was the last thing they cared about. Then slowly, as the Christian leaven worked, foregleams of a new charity began to appear ; the feelings of the peoples who were parcelled and annexed began very faintly to be considered—' The people, Lord, the people,

not thrones and crowns but men.' The national principle came to be recognized: after England and France, Spain found herself; and after and in spite of Spain, Holland; and, within living memory, Germany and Italy.

But it was always more difficult in Central Europe; more intricate there was the mingling of races, and far greater wrongs had been done. Turkey had long enslaved a gallant band of Christian nations who have produced martyrs by the hundred or by the thousand every year during the centuries in which they have refused to give up the Cross. Poland had been partitioned, and the Southern Slavs treated as mere serfs (' of a lower stage of civilization ') to be herded about by Teuton or Magyar. And the hatred of all for each has been something inconceivable. The position has always been acutely difficult, but no one thought of settling it in the only possible way, by recognizing the national principle—that is, by loving one's neighbour enough to consider his feelings. After all, we British would understand quickly enough the cruelty of the old diplomatic way, if we were told to-day that we had to be Turks, and next year that we were Austrians, and the year after that we had been transferred to Monaco with Monte Carlo for our capital. The small nations endured and survived with a glorious persistence: some were rescued by Russia: Greece was also helped by Britain, and Italy had our encouragement. Some became free; but all remained mutilated.

Then, last August, came the explosion; and the new Triple Alliance consists of the three empires whose greatness has depended upon the oppression of unwilling subjects. Turkey has been the worst offender—the children born of her were fire and sword, red ruin and the breaking up of laws; at one time she held Europe (with that once brilliant sister of Europe which was called Asia Minor) up to the very gates of Vienna. Germany is the least offender, yet

she can never know peace till the peoples of Poland, of Alsace-Lorraine, and even of Schleswig, are reunited to their own families. To both members of the Dual Monarchy we owe much ancient championship against the Turk, but Austria now sins against patriotism most of all: belonging to her on the north is the Slav nation of Bohemia; on her south she still retains two precious fragments of her former vassal—*Italia irredenta*; on her south-east dwell uneasily the Serbs of Herzegovina and Bosnia. Hungary is now her almost equal partner, but the ruling Magyar race is neither Slav nor Teuton, and loves neither Teuton nor Slav; and the Magyars themselves are but 51 per cent. of the people of Hungary, lording it over the Slavs and others who live in grinding poverty and emigrate whenever they can. East of Hungary, but still part of the strange dynastic conglomerate of the Habsburgs, is Transylvania, inhabited by Rumanians, who are proud of their Latin descent and speak a Romance language; north of this *Rumania irredenta* is the province of Galicia, containing the ancient Polish capital of Cracow, and consisting of two nationalities, the Poles, who are far better treated than in Germany, and kept faithful by a large measure of Home Rule, which they have used to oppress their subject-peoples of Russian blood and language, the Ruthenes.

Outside the Austro-Hungarian Empire are the Balkan States, free now at last, but all forced to be oppressors, mainly by the tortuous and immoral diplomacy of Vienna —Serbia, Greece, Rumania, even Turkey, all holding parts of Bulgaria, and all deliberately mutilated and mutually hostile, through the deliberate policy of their great neighbour.

The race-map of Central Europe is a strange thing.[1]

[1] One is printed in Mr. Ramsay Muir's *The National Principle and the War*, an admirable statement which should be read together with

A coloured one should be published, to hang in every house, and thus bring home to the people of the Allies and of the neutral nations how wickedly and fantastically the frontiers wriggle through the real nationalities of Europe. Here lies the sin which we are expiating ; here lie our duty and our hope ; and only here will be found the possibility of a peace that shall be permanent in Europe.

We have to be more patriotic, so patriotic that we shall believe in the patriotism of every patriotic nation. And therefore in the future, and for ever, we must consult the people themselves. If Alsace wishes to be French, or Swiss, or independent, and Poland to be an autonomous nation protected by federation with Russia, and Schleswig to be Danish again, the world must respect their nationality and consider their happiness. Croats, Slovenes, Ruthenes and Rumans, Magyars and Czechs, must develop their personality, like Belgium and Holland, in the way they think best. Then Austria, if she sees fit, will be free to federate herself with the other great German States ; for the integrity and prosperity of the real Germany must be as dear to us as our own. Nothing else is Christian, for Christianity means respect of every human individual and care for every human fellowship ; and only Christianity can prevent war.

But Christendom has never yet tried Christianity. The experiment would succeed, and Europe would be happy. We partly err in moaning at the horrors of the war, since the greater horror has been the long-drawn martyrdom of many nations broken and oppressed, which has made the war inevitable.

We have to be so patriotic that we shall believe in small nations as well as large, and no longer think that to be

Mr. H. A. L. Fisher's *The Value of Small States* and the tracts on Serbia, Russia, Austria and the Eastern Question, in the same excellent series of *Oxford Pamphlets* published by the Oxford University Press.

large is to be great. We owe what we are to the 'Little England'—

> This happy breed of men, this little world,
> This precious stone set in the silver sea;

to the little England wherein were lived the spacious days of great Elizabeth, and to little states like Florence, like Greece—and to a wayside inn in a little town in the smallest country of them all. We need not despise the small state, or be impatient of its stubborn patriotism. From it have come the great treasures, in it has dwelt the mighty heart of freedom, and to it is largely due that teeming life of unity in variety which we call modern civilization.

We have, finally, to be far more patriotic, so that we shall no longer need the goad of war to make us loyal, but shall love our country even in times of peace. For, indeed, patriotism has nothing to do with war—except for the hardness of our hearts—any more than religion has, though men have often fought for both, and forgotten both in peace. The Budget has just been presented to an applauding country as I write. Why do we remember only in war time that tax-paying is a glorious opportunity of national service, and that in this also God loveth a cheerful giver? Why do we welcome the waste of war, and rage against the beneficent expenditure of peace, unless it be that in times of peace we do not really love our country? Indeed we do not: in the agonizing years of sullen class warfare which we call the piping times of peace we live base lives, selfish, mean, and cruel; and year by year the towns spread hideously their streets and their slums over this fair England of ours, for which we are able to die but are not ready to live; and year by year the poor are oppressed, the lowly degraded, and the weak violated; and the cry of our submerged millions

goes up to heaven, while we expensively amuse ourselves. And we think we are patriots! Why, even in the toll of human life, the slaughter of war is small compared with the perennial casualties from preventable diseases, preventable infant mortality, unnecessarily dangerous trades —from ignorance, poverty, drunkenness and vice. It needed this war to make Russia sober; but the gain to Russia in human life alone will be made up in a few years, the gain in character and happiness is already beyond calculation. Alas, that not even this war can make Britain patriotic in the same way!

And yet even we, so accustomed to put private gain before the common weal, are strangely stirred. The careless are awake, the stupid have won that grace of imagination without which no man can be saved, the selfish think of others, the mean are almost generous. We are all patriotic. Virtue has come to us. England is strong. The Empire is united. 'Your King and Country need you.' Great God! Have they not needed us all through our lives?

The war will soon be finished—very soon, as history reckons. Shall we continue to be patriotic when it is over? Our forefathers did not, after the Hundred Years' War, or after the Civil War, or after the wars of the eighteenth century, or after Waterloo. We have not indeed yet shaken off all the degradation into which Britain sank after Napoleon was done with.

Shall we over-ride the coming reaction, and love our country when the war is over? Or shall we justify the philosophy of those who say that war is necessary because nothing else can purge us from the greater horrors of our unchastened wickedness in peace, because nothing else can make us loyal?

That will depend largely upon the spirit of those whose work it is to inform the minds and enlighten the con-

sciences of the people, upon statesmen and orators, journalists and authors, teachers and preachers—and still more upon the common spirit of all those quiet folk who care about the things that are unseen, upon their prayer, their talk, and the abounding influence of their lives.

Our loyalty to our nation will indeed depend upon our fealty to God. It is the very spirit of loyalty that we lack, for we have lost it in religion; our earthly patriotism has been so poor because our patriotism in our heavenly Kingdom has been so dim and shamefaced a thing; we have been disloyal to our native cities, and have allowed other folk to be enslaved in theirs, because we have not claimed our citizenship in the Jerusalem that is above, that is free and the mother of us all—the very matrix of our Christian civilization. The sense even and the savour of loyalty in the highest things has been half lost: no one becomes an American because he disapproves of the censorship, or German because he disagrees with the second article of the National Anthem, or Chinese because he wishes some ancient statutes amended. Yet for lesser things men and women will forsake a church, or transfer their allegiance to an alien creed, running giddily after strange gods. In Britain as in France, in all Europe and America, many find to-day their religion in patriotism, because religion has become so unpatriotic. Folk pick and choose, and fastidiously do poise their souls in nothingness, because we have forgotten that religion, too, is an allegiance, because we have not understood that churches like nations must perish, if their citizens are not ready to love them in spite of their faults and their mistakes, and to pour out their devotion in complete fidelity to the spirit of the fellowship which formulas and hierarchies can never but imperfectly express.

We have thought so long that the Church was founded on opinions, and that is why our loyalty has faded, and

in the greatest of all kingdoms patriotism has been at its worst. But the Church is not founded upon opinions. It is founded upon Humanity; and in that catholic and divine Fellowship of the Son of Man are gathered up and consecrated all the lesser fellowships which bring into common life the passion of fidelity, the yearning for proud obedience, and the constancy of true love through good or evil to the death.

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